

VZCZCXRO9282  
PP RUEHFL RUEHNP  
DE RUEHRO #0388/01 0931646  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 031646Z APR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1875  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0475  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0921  
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 9945  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 3558  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 3735  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 3011  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 000388

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [IT](#) [AF](#) [PK](#) [EALD](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY MUSTERING POLITICAL WILL TO DO MORE IN  
AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

REF: STATE 31102...

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i Elizabeth Dibble for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Government of Italy is in broad agreement with the conclusions of the U.S. Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategic Review and is actively considering additional contributions to make at the NATO Summit and the Pakistan Donor Conference in Tokyo. Although facing tight budgetary restrictions, GOI interlocutors are seized with the urgency of addressing problems in the region and looking for ways to do more. Italy currently plans to double its Carabinieri police training contingent to 100, send 240 troops and airlift for Election Security, contribute around USD 2 million to the ANA Trust Fund and 30-60 million Euros in soft loans to Pakistan, but is working to do more in each of these areas. GOI interlocutors tell us that high-level meetings with U.S. Officials would help bolster the efforts of MOD La Russa and FM Frattini to overcome resistance from the Ministry of Finance to additional military and civilian expenditures. Italy is actively lobbying Afghanistan and Pakistan's neighbors in the region to participate in the G8 Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan and Pakistan (Trieste, June 26-27), and has secured commitments from Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with India still playing coy. End Summary.

¶2. (C) A/DCM presented reftel points to MOD Political Adviser Alessandro Ruben and FM Frattini's Chief of Cabinet Alain Economides on April 1 and 2. Charge delivered points to Italian MFA DG for Asia and Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Massimo Iannucci on April 3. All interlocutors stressed their broad agreement with the U.S. Strategic Review on Afghanistan-Pakistan and their desire to do more within Italy's tight budgetary confines. Iannucci had had productive meetings with S/SRAP Holbrooke and is looking forward to working with him to develop the agenda for Italy's G8 Conference on Afghanistan and Pakistan in Trieste (June 26-27). Italy will seek to do more in Afghanistan, he said, with a focus on RC-West which Italy commands, and is currently reviewing its aid contribution there with an eye toward targeting further assistance more effectively (Note: Italy pledged 50 million Euros per year for three years at the 2008 Paris Donors Conference).

¶3. (C) According to Iannucci, Iranian Deputy FM Akhandzadeh confirmed to FM Frattini at the Hague that Iran would

participate in the Trieste meeting. Iannucci plans to travel to Tehran for follow-up discussions with the Iranians after Easter. He stressed that his "only agenda item" would be the Af-Pak ministerial in Trieste, i.e., no discussion of the nuclear issue was envisioned. Separately, Frattini's chief of staff told A/DCM that Frattini may still make a stop in Tehran in late April, as part of trip to Afghanistan and India, added to the Minister's itinerary in part to try to secure Indian attendance of Trieste. In addition, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have confirmed their attendance.

¶4. (SBU) Iannucci said current budgetary restrictions will make it difficult for Italy to contribute to the Pakistan Trust Fund, but the GOI may be able to contribute a further 20 million Euros in soft loans (on top of the 30-40 million Euros in soft loans that GOI officials had already previewed with us) with a focus on vocational training for sectors of the population vulnerable to poverty. Iannucci confirmed he will lead the Italian delegation at the Tokyo Donors Meeting.

¶5. (C) In the April 1 discussion with A/DCM, MOD Adviser Ruben noted that MOD La Russa had already done battle with Finance Minister Tremonti during the drafting of the last defense budget decree and was prepared to do so again, but that getting these kind of asks from as high a level in the USG as possible was critical, in order for LaRussa to enlist Berlusconi support for measures that will otherwise run into a Finance Ministry buzz-saw.

¶6. (C) When presented with the USG list of priority "asks" for Afghanistan, both Ruben and Economides said that they expected LaRussa and Frattini to support the requests and to try to get wider support for them within the cabinet. They confirmed Italy's informal commitment to double Carabinieri police trainers in Afghanistan to 100 and indicated that the number could grow higher, if, as on other "asks," they could get PM Berlusconi engaged to overrule spending constraints set by MinFin Tremonti. Italy plans to contribute 240 troops and airlift for Election Support Forces (ESF) but Ruben and Economides indicated that it might be possible to increase their ESF pledge to 400 to make those troops permanent, thereby filling existing shortfalls in RC-West and bringing Italian ISAF troop levels to about 3,200. Ruben in particular urged the U.S. to be patient with what will likely be necessarily a staged approach by the MOD in order to sneak the transition from ESF to permanent forces by Tremonti. Ruben noted that USG requests for additional OMLTs, ANA Trust Fund contributions and Guardia di Finanza border police and customs trainers would be more difficult to sell to the cabinet, for budgetary reasons, but not impossible.

¶7. (C) Comment: We have strong allies in MOD LaRussa and FM Frattini, but they have repeatedly hit a hard budgetary wall, erected by Tremonti, on asks of this nature. Berlusconi has paid lip-service to strong Italian participation in the new U.S.-led Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, but he has not as yet engaged to overrule Tremonti.

DIBBLE

"